

CHAPTER 4

PROCESSING CORRESPONDENCE/MESSAGES

In chapter 3, we described how correspondence and messages are prepared. In this chapter, we will deal with the just as important step of making sure the word is passed—the methods of packaging, addressing, and controlling the sending and receiving of correspondence and messages.

OFFICIAL MAIL

Official mail consists of communications, publications, and other material transmitted through the postal system or other official distribution systems that relate exclusively to the business of the Department of the Navy. Official mail, when it is sent through the postal system, is transmitted in an envelope that is metered. If the contents are not exclusively Navy business, you cannot use official mail postage. Do not enclose unofficial material or personal material with official mail.

ENVELOPES

Envelopes are available through the supply system. They will bear in the upper left-hand corner the words *Department of the Navy* above the return address and the printed words *Official Business* below the return address. These endorsements must be printed by a mechanical means. Envelopes come in various sizes. Letter-size that accommodates 8 1/2-inch by 11-inch paper folded in thirds is used unless the document is too bulky. If the document cannot be folded or should not be folded (such as a certificate) then sizes allowing flat mailing are available.

PREPARATION OF ENVELOPES

The *Standard Navy Distribution List* (SNDL) should be used for making sure you are using the proper address. This cannot be

overemphasized. If the address is wrong, your correspondence will not be delivered. Increased use of optical character readers by the post office makes it important that envelopes be addressed correctly. When you type envelopes, make sure you single-space. Do not use italic or artistic fonts. Type the address block style, in all caps, beginning about one-third the length of the envelope from the left side and halfway down from the top. The return address is typed in the space indicated at the upper left corner.

The city, state, and full nine-digit ZIP Code appear in sequence on the bottom line. Not less than two nor more than six spaces should be left between the last letter of the state and first digit of the ZIP Code. The street address or box number is placed on the line above the city, state, and ZIP Code line. Box numbers and street addresses should never be combined on the same line. An Attention line, if used, should be placed above the street or box number so as not to interfere with optical scanning which generally begins scanning the bottom line first.

TYPES OF MAIL SERVICE

The postal classification and type of mail service determine the means of transmission, speed of delivery, security, control, and cost of mailing. Postcards and conventional letter-size sealed envelopes automatically receive First-Class service without special markings. Larger unsealed envelopes and parcels containing printed matter must be marked with the special mail service requirement.

FIRST-CLASS MAIL

First-Class Mail is given priority handling over lower classes of mail throughout the

postal service. Transportation within the domestic system is by airlift or expedited surface delivery. Official First-Class Mail is normally sent by commercial air transportation from the continental United States to overseas areas of delivery when addressed to an activity with an FPO or APO address.

REGISTERED MAIL

Registered mail receives added protection because of its value and importance. It is the safest means of any mail service since, from the time a piece is mailed, someone is always personally responsible to account for it.

The postal service provides the sender with a receipt and an identification number for each article received. The identification number is also placed on the item at the time of mailing and is used throughout the delivery process. A continuous chain of receipts is maintained by each person who handles the article. The person who signed the receipt last is responsible for the item until a receipt is signed by the person to whom the article is addressed.

The post office that services your command provides an incoming and outgoing registered mail log. If this log is used properly, it will help you to pinpoint the date a specific piece of mail was sent or received. It should include the registered identification number, identification of the subject matter, the addressee, and the signature of the person receiving the material from you. The *Security Manual* and chapter 8 of this training manual provide more information on how the registered mail system is used to transmit classified information.

EXPRESS MAIL

Express Mail is the class of mail afforded the highest priority in handling and provides highly reliable service. Use Express Mail only when it is the most cost-effective way to accomplish a mission within time, security,

and accountability constraints. Heads of the Department of Defense are authorized to approve the use of Express Mail. Tenant commands must request approval from the host installation to use Express Mail when the host provides the postage and fees for the tenant's mail.

CERTIFIED MAIL

Certified mail is a postal service that provides the sender with a mailing receipt. A record of delivery is kept at the post office. Service is limited to First-Class mailing of material requiring restricted delivery. The sender is given a receipt and a record is made of delivery to the post office. The addressee completes a record of delivery that accompanies the piece of mail which is then returned to you.

CLASSIFIED MAIL

Chapter 8 of this training manual gives the procedures for processing classified material.

HANDLING INCOMING MAIL

You may be assigned to handle incoming mail in any department or office to which you are attached. In a departmental office aboard a ship such an assignment may not involve a very large amount of mail, but if you are in the captain's office, you will be handling all the official mail for the ship. In any case, it is important that you know what happens to incoming mail.

The volume of mail received by naval activities today makes it desirable to eliminate unnecessary operations wherever possible. In doing so, however, it is important to make sure adequate records of all important correspondence are maintained. Experience and judgment are required to determine which mail need not be controlled, which should be controlled, and how the necessary controls can be maintained.

The steps that take place when official mail comes aboard a Navy ship or shore activity are basically the same. They are sorting and opening, routing, and controlling (where required).

Although this process takes place everywhere, differences between conditions aboard ship and those of a shore-based office cause some of the operations to be done differently. We will look at shipboard and shore-based procedures separately.

INCOMING MAIL ABOARD SHIP

Mail delivered to a naval vessel falls into two broad groups—official mail and personal mail—for members of the ship's company. Personal mail is, of course, delivered unopened to the individual to whom it is addressed. Official mail addressed to the commanding officer (CO) is taken to the captain's office where it is opened by the Yeoman (YN). *Standard Organization and Regulations of the U.S. Navy* (SORM), OPNAVINST 3120.32, section 620.5, contains detailed guidance for processing incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Classified Mail

Classified mail is logged in separate logs for Confidential and Secret. The mail YN opens the outer envelope, then delivers the inner envelope unopened to the command security manager or clerk who signs for it in the mail log.

Unclassified Mail

Some ships maintain an unclassified logbook containing similar information found in the classified material logbooks. Other ships find this too bulky or time-consuming and log only important documents, such as those requiring action. Action correspondence may be also tracked by correspondence control slips. Your supervisor will train you in the specific requirements of your ship.

Control Slips

Control slips are placed on mail as required by local practice. Figure 4-1 is a sample control slip. You will fill in the blocks identifying the material and the control slip number and pass it to the office supervisor. This person indicates on the slip the department heads to whom the correspondence should go for action and those who should see it for information.

Departmental Routing

Large shipboard departments sometimes indicate internal routing to make sure the correspondence reaches all within the department who should see it. The additional routing is also indicated on the control slip. This keeps track of the document to help keep it moving and to make sure it is returned to the captain's office or to the next department without undue delay.

Copies of Incoming Correspondence

Sometimes more copies of a document are needed to ensure proper action is being taken. You may also need to retain a copy at your desk during the time the original is being routed. If you do make a copy for this purpose, you can destroy it when the original is returned and action has been taken.

Attaching Background Material

Before you route correspondence to the person who is to take action, make sure you attach all previous related correspondence and documents such as charts or blueprints. This preparation saves the time of the person who must take action. If the background materials are in the captain's office, they are attached before the letter goes to the department head. If they are retained in the department, the YN assigned there attaches them before delivering the letter to the department head. Don't delay delivery of mail while you conduct a search for these papers, however.

INCOMING MAIL ASHORE

In large headquarters organizations, and in other naval shore activities, there is much less personal mail. However, the official mail load may be quite large and require a large mailroom with several persons opening and sorting.

Incoming mail may be given three sortings, at which every effort should be made to separate out as much as possible for delivery without further processing. Small volume may result in sortings being combined. Mail that passes on to the second and third stage should do so only because it requires the additional processing given at each of these steps. The trick is to release it at the earliest possible sort to avoid unnecessary handling.

Figure 4-2 shows the three sortings and action generated by each, and each is explained more fully in following paragraphs.

Initial Sorting

On receipt, mail is given an initial sorting that separates mail that can be delivered

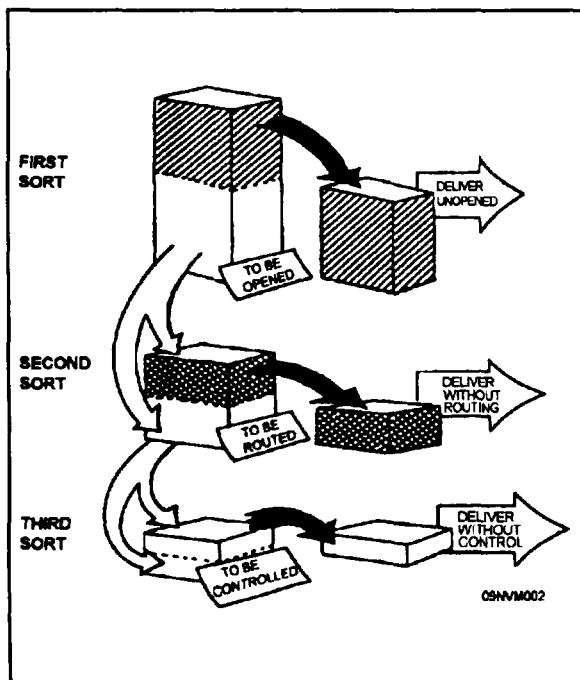


Figure 4-2.-Sorting incoming mail in a Navy mailroom.

without opening. This is identified by Attention To lines in the address, or knowing by experience that letters from certain commands can be forwarded directly to a specific department. The use of a sorting box comes in handy for the initial sort. Letters to be opened go in one place, and the others can be placed directly into a space marked for the receiving department.

Secondary Sorting

After the initial sorting the mail that was not directly routed is opened. After opening, it is again sorted. At this time, routine mail (mail that presents no special problem) is separated from mail that is nonroutine. The sorter does not read further than necessary to determine if a letter is routine, and when satisfied that no special action is required, the document is forwarded directly to the appropriate department. During secondary sorting, mail is checked for enclosures, but mail should not be delayed awaiting missing enclosures. Indicate that enclosures were not received on the control slip (if used) or on the document if it is forwarded directly to a department.

Time-stamping, if required, is done at the secondary sorting. Use it only on congressional mail, claims, or contracts. It is not recommended that all mail be time-stamped. This just adds another event that could delay delivery.

Sorting for Control

Mail that remains for the third sorting includes that for which the action person is not readily apparent and mail that requires control. The main purpose of this sorting is to make sure mail requiring control receives it.

Routing

Mail that does not require control is routed without the use of a route slip or mail

control form. The office code and file symbol are placed on the letter itself.

When mail is being routed to several offices, a stamp may be used with check boxes for several addressees (fig. 4-3).

PRINCIPLES OF MAIL CONTROL

Mail control is defined in the Navy as any procedure used to make a record of the receipt, location, or dispatch of mail. The definition includes logging or preparing other records to indicate receipt, providing signature for classified and registered mail if required, following up to ensure action, and providing information on location of the item.

The mail control form, already mentioned as a device for routing mail, is a combination of a mail log and a route sheet. It may also serve as a follow-up record and cross-reference sheet. The routing is marked on the control form. Space is provided for the initials of addressees and for their comments

	KEY	INIT
CO		
XO		
NAV		
OPS		
COMM		
WEAP		
1ST LT		
ENG		
MPA		
DCA		
E/RC		
SUP		
MED		
CMAA		
YN		
DATE		
DESTROY	FILE:	

09NVM003

Figure 4-3.-Stamp for routing routine mail.

or notes regarding action. The date of the letter and date of its receipt are included. In the cases of mail requiring action by a specific date, a follow-up date is added. Maintaining a tickler system for action correspondence is important. Whenever you use a control form, retain one of the copies, so you know when the response is required to leave the command.

HANDLING OUTGOING MAIL

With outgoing mail, as with incoming, the same basic functions are performed afloat and ashore, but exactly how they are performed is governed by the needs of the activity.

Generally, the shipboard procedures are simpler since a relatively small amount of mail is processed out and most of it is signed by the captain.

Department heads and their assistants frequently draft letters dealing with their departments, although many letters are prepared completely in the captain's office.

REVIEWING OUTGOING MAIL

The person in charge of the captain's office usually is responsible for reviewing all outbound correspondence before it is given to the captain for signature. Sometimes a letter may require review and approval by a number of persons before it is ready for signature. In this case a routing slip may be used. Generally, persons whose approval is required indicate this approval by initialing the official file copy.

RECORDS OF OUTGOING MAIL

All outgoing mail classified Secret must be registered. Confidential material must be registered if it is to be sent outside the continental United States or to an FPO or APO address; otherwise, it may be sent via First-Class Mail or certified mail. Specific

guidelines are contained in the *Security Manual* and chapter 8 of this manual.

Once again, local practice may require that a log be maintained for all outgoing correspondence. However, this tends to be time-consuming and bulky. A well-kept file of outgoing correspondence should be sufficient for identification of when and where correspondence was sent.

DISPATCHING

After a letter is signed, it is date-stamped or typed, serialized (if serial numbers are used), and given a final check for enclosures. The file and information copies are removed and appropriately filed and routed. The letter is now ready to go into its envelope and on its way. When a number of letters are addressed to the same activity, they should be sent in the same envelope.

MESSENGER SERVICE

Since shore activities are generally spread out, correspondence routing is usually handled through a messenger system, usually known as guard mail or yard mail. A messenger picks it up in the originating office and carries it to the next person listed on the envelope. The post office on base may have the facilities to deliver guard mail. Where different commands are located in the same geographical area, official correspondence can also be sent via this messenger system.

PROCESSING MESSAGE TRAFFIC

Messages are the quickest form of written communications system in the Navy. Our telecommunications system is designed to get time-sensitive or critical information to addressees rapidly for the effective use of information. Complete procedures for processing naval messages are contained in NTP-3. The information provided in the next few paragraphs will aid in the processing of message traffic.

INCOMING MESSAGE TRAFFIC

With the automation of message traffic (use of computers), incoming message traffic has become quite simple. The Chief of Naval Operations has endorsed the Message Text Formatting (MTF) Editor as the standard naval message preparation program. Messages received by the communications center via MTF processing systems for delivery to over-the-counter (OTC) commands will be stored on diskettes provided by each command. These diskettes will be placed in the commands message box for pickup. The messages are retrieved from the diskette at the command. The messages can either be run off on hard paper copy or the diskette be passed from reader to reader. Passing the diskette from reader to reader will reduce the amount of paper accumulated by making hard copy messages and thus reduce the cost of message preparation.

OUTGOING MESSAGE TRAFFIC

Diskettes containing outgoing messages must be prepared according to the NTP-3 before delivery to the communications center for transmission. Customers are encouraged to use 3 1/2-inch floppy diskettes. Commands are required to affix a write protect tab to each diskette and also to scan each one for computer viruses before delivery. Commands are responsible for ensuring all messages are properly formatted and delivered by authorized courier. All previously used diskettes must be cleared and reformatted before being reused for message storage.

SUMMARY

This chapter has given you basics on how to process correspondence and messages. You will become better at this as you gain knowledge and experience. However, it is always wise to refer to the references listed in this chapter. Remember, when in doubt, go to the manuals.

